

real goal of the left was not simply to have rational, if you will, laws that might limit the use of guns—what guns could be had, how many clips, who could have them; criminals, the mentally infirm—but, rather, that was just a smokescreen to get rid of guns. And there was enough evidence back in the 1980s and 1990s that people actually wanted to do that.

So if you look at the ads from the NRA and the groups even farther over, the gun owners of America, their basic complaint is that the CHUCK SCHUMERS of the world want to take away your gun, even if it is the hunting rifle your Uncle Willie gave you when you were 14.

I think it would be very important for those of us who are for gun control—some rational laws on guns—to make it clear once and for all that is not our goal, to make it clear that the belief is that the second amendment does matter, that there is a right to bear arms, just like there is a right to free speech and others, and if you are an average, normal American citizen, you have the right to bear arms.

I think if the people who are pro-gun and from the more rural areas, and different than Brooklyn, the city I am from, were convinced that there was a broad consensus even in the pro-gun control movement that there was a right to bear arms, they might get off their haunches a little bit. I think that is important for this part of the compromise. So the Heller decision, which basically said that—and now is the law of the land, but was not until a few years ago—should not be something that is opposed by those who are for rational laws on guns.

I saw that even the Brady organization, that I have worked very closely with—Jim and Sarah Brady helped us pass the assault weapons ban and the Brady law; I have worked with them closely and have known them for decades—but even the Brady organization, which in the past had not had that position, is now beginning to embrace it. I think that is for the good, and I think people should know that.

Once we establish that it is in the Constitution, it is part of the American way of life—even though some do not like that—but once we establish that basic paradigm: that no one wants to abolish guns for everybody or only allow a limited few to have them under the most limited circumstances—this is on a national level—then maybe we can begin the other side of the dialog.

The other side of the dialog is, once you know no one is going to take away your gun, if you are not a felon—your shotgun that you like to go hunting with or a sidearm if you are a store owner in a crime-ridden area—we can then say to those on the other side: OK. We understand that it is unfair to read the second amendment so narrowly and read all the other amendments so broadly, and you have seen us as doing that. But, in response, we would say, and I would say, that no amendment is

absolute, and whether it is in reaction to what happened in the 1980s and the 1990s or because of fanaticism, or for maybe fundraising reasons, it seems that too many on the pro-gun side believe the second amendment is as absolute, or more absolute, than all the other amendments. They are taking the converse position to what I mentioned before—the left seeing the second amendment as minuscule, but the right seeing the second amendment as broader than every other amendment.

Certainly, the right believes in antipornography laws. That is a limitation on the first amendment. Certainly, most people in America believe what—I think it was Oliver Wendell Holmes or Louis D. Brandeis who said: You cannot falsely scream “fire” in a crowded theater. That, too, was a limitation on the first amendment.

Every amendment is a balancing test. That is what the Constitution has said.

No amendment is absolute or our society would be tied in a complete knot. And so we say to our colleagues, this is not a partisan issue completely. There are some Republicans who are for gun control and some Democrats who oppose it completely. It seems to be more of a regional issue than almost an ideological issue. But we would say to our colleagues from the pro-gun side of things, look, there is a right to bear arms. We are not trying to take guns away from people we do not have any reason to take them away from. But you have to then admit that you cannot be so rigid, so doctrinaire that there should be no limitation on the second amendment.

The Brady law is a reasonable limitation on the second amendment, saying that felons or the mentally infirm or spousal abusers should not have a gun. The Heller decision acknowledged that those kinds of reasonable limitations did not violate the second amendment, just as the Court has recognized they are limitations that do not violate the first amendment, all because it is a balancing test.

So I would argue—and we can all find the balance in different ways—not only is the Brady law a reasonable limitation on the second amendment, it is not interfering with the average person's right to bear arms, but neither are the assault weapons. I know there was an argument between my colleague from California, with whom I agree, and my colleague from Wisconsin, with whom I do not agree: An AR-15 is used for hunting. But I have heard people say you should be able to buy a bazooka or a tank. My view is, the assault weapons ban that was passed, which was a rather modest bill, was less important in saving lives than the Brady law by many degrees. But I would argue it is a reasonable thing to do. A limitation that says you should not be able to buy a magazine that holds 1,000 rounds, that is a reasonable thing to do. Rules that say we should be able to trace where a gun originated so we

can find those who are violating some of these limitations such as the Brady law—gun shops that do not check your background even though they are required to by law—is a reasonable thing to do. Again, we can debate where to draw the line of reasonableness.

But we might, might, might—and I do not want to be too optimistic here, having years and years of having gone through this—but we might be able to come to an agreement in the middle where we say, yes, there is a right to bear arms, and, yes, there can be reasonable limitations on the second amendment just as there can be on others.

That is the place I suggest we try to go. Maybe, maybe, we can break through the hard ideological lines that have been drawn on this issue. Maybe, maybe, maybe we can tell those who are at the extremes on the far right and the far left that we disagree with you. And maybe, maybe, maybe we could pass some laws that might, might, might stop some of the unnecessary tragedies that have occurred, or, at the very least, when you have someone who is mentally infirm, such as the shooter in Aurora, limit the damage they are able to do. Maybe.

But I would suggest the place to start here is for us to admit there is a right to bear arms, admit the Heller decision has a place in the Constitution, just like decisions that supported the other amendments, and at the same time say that does not mean that right is absolute. That is just a suggestion. I have been thinking about this since I read those horrible articles about those young men and women being killed. I would welcome comments, particularly from my colleagues on the other side of this issue, whether they be Democrat or Republican, on those thoughts.

Just as we have fought over and over and over again on so many issues, and we have gotten into our corners—there may be none that we have gotten into our corners on more than on gun control. Maybe it is time, as on those other issues, to come out of the corners and try, people of good will, who will disagree and come from different parts of the country with different needs, maybe there is a way we can come together and try and try to break through the logjam and make the country a better place.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with

Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

19TH INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am proud that the 19th biennial International AIDS conference is being held in the Nation's Capital after 22 years of being held abroad.

President Obama was instrumental in bringing the conference back to the United States by announcing in October 2009 that the United States would lift its entry restriction on people living with HIV.

The United States has been the leader in combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and it is fitting that this significant meeting of the best and brightest scientists, philanthropists, activists, government leaders, and people living with HIV/AIDS is taking place in Washington, DC.

It is made even more symbolic by the fact that Washington, DC, has the highest rate of AIDS than any city in the Nation.

As we look to "Turn the Tide Together," as the theme of the conference indicates, we must continue to support a number of long-term strategies both at home and around the world, building on the successes we have seen in the past few decades.

Significant scientific breakthroughs have been made this year alone, and we can see investments we have made to fight HIV/AIDS beginning to pay off.

The National Institutes of Health, for example, released a study last fall on the HPTN 052 clinical trial that showed that if newly infected individuals started antiretroviral treatment when their immune systems are relatively healthy, they are 96 percent less likely to transmit the virus to their uninfected partner.

Others report that the cost of treating HIV is four times less than previously thought. And now more than ever, scientists believe that an effective HIV vaccine is within reach.

These are amazing breakthroughs and could reflect the beginning of the end as we work toward an AIDS-free generation.

This past year new infection rates and AIDS deaths decreased. Twenty percent more people had access to antiretroviral therapy worldwide in 2011 than they did in 2010.

These numbers don't appear out of thin air—they correlate to increased investments from the United States and the Global Fund. This is a time when we must continue funding our investments to fight HIV/AIDS.

But let's talk about how we have achieved these amazing results.

President Bush was instrumental in establishing PEPFAR. The President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief was initially a \$15 billion commitment over 5 years to fight the AIDS pandemic.

Today, PEPFAR is one of the largest health initiatives ever established by a single country and remains critical to saving millions of lives.

PEPFAR is a strongly bipartisan program, and since its inception, it has directly supported nearly 13 million people with access to care and services.

As of 2011, the United States supported lifesaving antiretroviral treatment for more than 3.9 million men, women, and children worldwide.

PEPFAR counseled 9.8 million pregnant women to test them for HIV/AIDS, allowing more than 200,000 babies to be born AIDS-free.

Another key ally in the fight against AIDS is the Global Fund.

The Global Fund was established in 2002 as a public-private partnership, requiring the buy-in of grant recipient countries. These participants must commit to continuing the program and serving its people after the Global Fund grant expires.

This novel approach has proved wildly successful. To date, the Global Fund has supported more than 1,000 programs in 151 countries and provided AIDS treatment to over 3 million people.

The United States must continue to be a leading supporter of the Global Fund.

The generosity of the American people has improved and saved lives, stemmed the spread of HIV/AIDS, and provided medicine, hospitals, and clinics to those who are infected.

Together, PEPFAR and the Global Fund have built health care systems where none existed before and allowed individuals infected with HIV/AIDS to dream of a future.

These programs also ensure that the countries we are working in play a part in helping their own people survive and thrive.

While we have made significant progress in combating HIV/AIDS, we cannot be complacent.

Here in the Nation's Capital, the AIDS rate is higher than in some Sub-Saharan African countries, and infection rates are even growing in some demographics.

In Illinois, 37,000 individuals are living with AIDS, with 80 percent of them residing in Chicago.

Internationally, the gains that we have made could easily be lost; the increase of infections in Southeast Asia, Russia, and the Ukraine—places that have historically had low infection rates is alarming.

If we lose our focus or if international donors stop contributing to key programs, we lose out on the momentum built in recent years to combat this disease.

That is why it is good that this administration continues to push for an AIDS-free generation.

Secretary Clinton announced three new efforts during this week's conference: \$15 million in implementation research to identify specific interventions, \$20 million for a challenge fund

to support country-led efforts to expand services, and \$2 million through the Robert Carr Civil Society Network Fund to bolster civil society groups.

Secretary Clinton also noted: "Creating an AIDS-free generation takes more than the right tools, as important as they are. Ultimately, it's about people—the people who have the most to contribute to this goal and the most to gain from it." She is right.

Creating an AIDS-free generation is about working together to help save and improve lives. It is about supporting the individuals and communities that have already made great inroads in addressing this epidemic.

By reaffirming our leadership to initiatives such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund, which support these individuals and communities, we can continue to make a difference. Only then can we truly wish to usher in an AIDS-free generation.

OUR SHARED COMMITMENT TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I rise to discuss the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the tremendous progress we have made thus far, and the need to do even more if we are going to stop this devastating disease in its tracks.

The fight against HIV/AIDS has been a long one. In more than 30 years, approximately 26 million people have died from AIDS, and there are still an astounding 7,000 new infections every day. But our commitment to combating this disease is making important strides.

In the past decade, new HIV infections fell 20 percent, thanks in large part to the lifesaving antiretroviral treatment we and our partners are making available in every corner of the world that AIDS touches.

We know that relatively healthy people with HIV who receive early treatment with antiretroviral drugs are 96 percent less likely to pass on the virus to their uninfected partners. So treating these individuals not only allows them to live their lives in dignity but is also an important key to prevention.

In my home State of Maryland, the Jhpiego program has spent decades addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South America, Africa, Europe and Asia. Jhpiego has made enormous strides in prevention of mother-to-child transmission, increasing counseling and testing and providing greater access to antiretroviral drugs.

Jhpiego has integrated HIV/AIDS services with tuberculosis, cervical cancer, malaria in pregnancy, family planning and maternal and child health services, to address the problem of co-infection among HIV/AIDS patients and to reach as many people as possible. These integrated services represent the future of our health assistance. We have learned from programs like Jhpiego's what our best practices should be so that we are innovators in prevention, care, and treatment.